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## Newsletter - 1995-12-07

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# NEWSLETTER

104-1537

7 December 1995

Washington, DC

**COLA EQUITY FOR MILITARY RETIREES.** Throughout the course of this year I have heard regularly from individuals asking me that action be taken to restore equity between their pensions and those of federal civil service retirees.

What they are referring to is a provision contained in the 1993 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act that delayed the payment of annual cost-of-living-adjustments to both military and federal civil service retirees. Further, this legislation treated both groups differently by providing for a three month delay in the payment of benefits for civil service retirees, but a nine month delay in the payment of benefits for military retirees.

In an effort to honor our commitment to our nation's military retirees, I am pleased to advise that legislation, H R 2664, has been introduced restoring equity between their pensions and those of federal civil service retirees. I am a co-sponsor of this bill.

Last year, the Appropriations Subcommittee on National Defense was successful in providing the funds necessary to eliminate the disparity between the effective dates for military and civilian retiree COLA's for 1995. While successful in eliminating the COLA disparity for this year, there remains a disparity in the adjustment dates for the next three years.

Asking military personnel, their families and retirees to accept a substantial reduction in retirement benefits is an affront to those who serve, and those who have served. There is certainly no doubt in my mind that those men and women who risked their lives in defense of our great nation are willing to do their part to help get our fiscal house in order. What they expect and deserve, though, is fairness. That is what this issue is about -- making certain that the more than 1.5 million military retirees who spent a lifetime on guard for freedom are treated fairly.

Ensuring that the promises made to our nation's military personnel are kept is very important to me. This legislation will do just that, and I am happy to report that the Chairman of the National Security Appropriations Subcommittee, C W "Bill" Young, will be urging the House Leadership to expedite the consideration of this bill.

# # #

**THE \$50 RULE -- AN UPDATE.** Residents of the 15th District are well aware of the difficulties that have come about as a result of the \$50 per day/per person duty-free allowance for accompanied imports. Those who live in south Texas know that this is an issue of longstanding concern to area citizens and to U S business in the border area.

In the most recent effort to address this, I joined with others from Texas and Arizona in sending the following letter to Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin:

"We understand that the government of Mexico recently decided to increase the monthly personal duty exemption for certain goods purchased by Mexicans in the United States. While the so-called "\$50 rule" still represents a serious obstacle to U S - Mexico free trade and a violation of the spirit of NAFTA, we nevertheless consider this monthly exemption decision by the Mexican government to be a step in the right direction.

"During discussions about these changes, it was brought to our attention that the Department of Treasury is also negotiating with Mexico an acceleration in the elimination of its duties for certain NAFTA-originating manufactured goods. Treasury officials tell us the U S has presented an interim proposal whereby Mexico will immediately eliminate its duties on such NAFTA-originating goods purchased in the U S by Mexican border-area residents and returned by them within the expanded limits of the monthly personal duty exemption.

"Southwest border retailers, among the strongest supporters of NAFTA, have been extremely hard hit by the \$50 rule. Many retailers have been forced to sharply reduce or discontinue operations. Thus, the elimination of trade restrictions is of tremendous importance to us and to our border area merchants. We hope the Department of Treasury will continue to include an elimination of the \$50 rule in its negotiations. As always, we are prepared to work with the Department of Treasury in our joint efforts to accomplish these objectives."

I will continue doing everything I can to help with this matter with the hope that eventually we will see this limit eliminated.

# # #

**CONSTITUENT VISITORS.** Alejandrina R Mallory, of Alamo; Norman Stephens, Marisa De Anda, Everardo Sustaita, and Yanira Aguilar, all of Edinburg; Jane Ward, Phillip Ward, and Dr Gordon Ward, of Ingleside; Carlos Maganda, and Richard and Shirley Nelson, of Mission; Jesus Salinas, Alicia Duran, Kosha Patel, Jeff Badre, Bonnie Garza, Auecita Espinoza, Bernice Zavala, Laura Pazin, and Veronica De La Garza, all of McAllen; Koque Villarreal, of Pharr; Amado Salinas, of Raymondville; Iris Flores, of San Juan; and Claude Gurley and Mayela Almazan, both of Weslaco.

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